

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for generating a broadcast schedule, comprising:
- 2 broadcasting meta-data to a plurality of client systems, the meta-data
  - 3 including descriptions of a plurality of pieces of content that are in consideration
  - 4 for upcoming broadcasts by a broadcast operations center;
  - 5 receiving individual sets of client demand feedback data from at least a
  - 6 portion of said plurality of client systems, each individual set of client demand
  - 7 feedback data comprising data indicating a client interest level in at least a portion
  - 8 of the plurality of pieces of content;
  - 9 maintaining a broadcast schedule queue comprising an ordered list of
  - 10 pieces of content that indicates relative levels of client interest in each piece of
  - 11 content that are derived from an aggregation of the client demand feedback data;
  - 12 and
  - 13 selecting a batch of content comprising one or more pieces of content from
  - 14 a top portion of the broadcast schedule queue to be broadcast during a next
  - 15 broadcast schedule window based on a size of said one or more pieces of content
  - 16 in combination with an available bandwidth for the next broadcast schedule
  - 17 window.

1           2. The method of claim 1, wherein the method is performed continuously  
2 such that a new batch of content is broadcast during sequential broadcast schedule  
3 windows.

1           3. The method of claim 1, further comprising resetting the client demand  
2 feedback data for each piece of content in the batch of content that is selected to  
3 be broadcast during a next broadcast schedule window in response to a broadcast  
4 of that batch of content such that the piece of content cannot be selected again for  
5 a subsequent broadcast until new client demand feedback data corresponding to  
6 that piece of content is received.

1           4. The method of claim 1, wherein the individual sets of client demand  
2 feedback data are received from respective client systems on an asynchronous  
3 basis and the broadcast schedule queue is recalculated upon receiving each  
4 individual set of client demand feedback data.

1           5. The method of claim 1, further comprising adjusting the broadcast  
2 schedule queue in consideration of business objectives.

1           6. The method of claim 1, wherein the client demand feedback data  
2 comprises ratings data corresponding to respective pieces of content, and wherein  
3 the pieces of content in the broadcast schedule queue are ordered based on

4 corresponding relative rating values derived from an aggregation of the ratings  
5 data.

1 7. The method of claim 6, wherein the aggregation of the ratings data  
2 comprises calculating an average ratings value for each piece of content and the  
3 highest rated piece of content is the piece of content with the highest average  
4 rating value.

1 8. The method of claim 6, wherein at least a portion of the ratings data  
2 comprise rating inputs provided by users of the client systems, each rating input  
3 indicating a level of desirability of a given user to receive a corresponding piece  
4 of content.

1 9. The method of claim 6, wherein at least a portion of the ratings data is  
2 automatically generated by the client systems based on data stored on the client  
3 systems that are indicative of content preferences of users of those client systems.

1 10. The method of claim 6, further comprises adjusting ratings data  
2 corresponding to any pieces of content that are rated by a given client system in  
3 consideration of a revenue-generating potential for those pieces of content.

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1           11. The method of claim 6, wherein, for each individual set of client  
2 demand feedback data received from a client system, a first portion of the ratings  
3 data comprises rating inputs provided by one or more users of that client system  
4 and a second portion of the ratings data are automatically generated by that client  
5 system based on data stored on that client system that are indicative of content  
6 preferences of said one or more users of that client system.

1           12. The method of claim 6, wherein the meta-data is broadcast as a  
2 continuous stream and includes a content descriptor for each piece of content  
3 comprising a set of attributes and attribute values that are used to describe that  
4 piece of content, and further wherein at least a portion of the client systems  
5 provide ratings data corresponding to an individual piece of content in response to  
6 receiving the content descriptor for that piece of content.

1           13. The method of claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the individual  
2 sets of client demand feedback data comprise relative rankings data pertaining to  
3 relative levels of interest in at least two pieces of content, and the broadcast  
4 schedule queue is determined, at least in part, by aggregating the relative rankings  
5 data.

1           14. The method of claim 13, wherein the aggregation of the relative  
2 rankings data comprises calculating an average ranking value for each piece of

3 content among said plurality of pieces of content and wherein the ordered list  
4 reflects the relative average ranking values of corresponding pieces of content.

1 15. The method of claim 13, wherein at least a portion of the relative  
2 rankings data comprise individual sets of relative ranking inputs provided by users  
3 of the client systems, each individual set of relative ranking inputs comprising a  
4 relative ranking of at least two pieces of content, wherein the relative ranking is  
5 indicative of a relative level of desirability of a given user of a respective client  
6 system to receive a broadcast of the pieces of content ranked by that user.

1 16. The method of claim 13, wherein at least a portion of the relative  
2 rankings data is automatically generated by the client systems based on data stored  
3 on the client systems that are indicative of content preferences of users of the  
4 client systems.

1 17. The method of claim 13, further comprises adjusting relative rankings  
2 data corresponding to pieces of content that are rated by a given client system in  
3 consideration of a revenue-generating potential for those pieces of content.

1 18. The method of claim 13, wherein, for each individual set of client  
2 demand feedback data among at least a portion of the individual sets of client  
3 demand feedback data comprising relative rankings data, a first portion of the

4 relative rankings data comprises relative ranking inputs provided by one or more  
5 users of the client system from which that individual set of client feedback is  
6 received and a second portion of the relative rankings data are automatically  
7 generated by that client system based on data stored on that client system that are  
8 indicative of content preferences of said one or more users of that client system.

1 19. The method of claim 13, wherein a current set of meta-data  
2 corresponding to a set of pieces of content considered for an upcoming broadcast  
3 is broadcast as a continuous stream that is repeated and includes a respective  
4 content descriptor for each piece of content included in the set of pieces of  
5 content, and wherein at least a portion of the individual sets of client demand  
6 feedback data includes a ranked list expressing a relative interest in all of the  
7 pieces of content in the set of pieces of content.

1 20. The method of claim 1 further comprising broadcasting a broadcast  
2 schedule prior to broadcasting the batch of content that is selected to be broadcast  
3 during the next broadcast schedule window.

1 21. The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of client systems are  
2 segmented such that each client system is a member of a particular segment  
3 among multiple segments and each individual set of client feedback data includes  
4 data that identifies the segment the client system is a member of, and further

5 wherein one or more pieces of content are selected to be broadcast during the next  
6 broadcast schedule window for each segment.

1 22. The method of claim 21, wherein the plurality of client systems are  
2 segmented based on geography such that each client is assigned to a geographical  
3 region.

1 23. The method of claim 21, wherein the plurality of client systems are  
2 segmented based on a network by which each client receives broadcast content.

1 24. The method of claim 1, further comprising broadcasting the batch of  
2 content using a multi-stage broadcast network.

1 25. The method of claim 24, wherein the multi-stage broadcast network  
2 uses a store and forward mechanism in which broadcast data is stored and  
3 forwarded between different stages.

1 26. An apparatus, comprising:  
2 a processor having circuitry to execute instructions;  
3 a communications interface coupled to the processor to receive data from  
4 the one or more client systems;

5 a storage device coupled to the processor, having sequences of instructions  
6 stored therein, which when executed by the processor cause the apparatus to  
7 receive individual sets of client demand feedback data from a  
8 plurality of client systems, each individual set of client demand feedback  
9 data generated in response to meta-data that is broadcast to the plurality of  
10 client systems, the meta-data including descriptions of a plurality of pieces  
11 of content that are in consideration for upcoming broadcasts, each  
12 individual set of client demand feedback data indicating a client interest  
13 level in at least a portion of the plurality of pieces of content;  
14 maintain a broadcast schedule queue comprising an ordered list of  
15 pieces of content that indicates relative levels of client interest in each  
16 piece of content that are derived from an aggregation of the client demand  
17 feedback data; and  
18 select a batch of content comprising one or more pieces of content  
19 from a top portion of the broadcast schedule queue to be broadcast during  
20 a next broadcast schedule window based on a size of said one or more  
21 pieces of content in combination with an available bandwidth for the next  
22 broadcast schedule window.

1 27. The apparatus of claim 26, wherein the client demand feedback data  
2 for each piece of content in the batch of content that is selected to be broadcast  
3 during a next broadcast schedule window is reset in response to a broadcast of that



4 batch of content such that the piece of content cannot be selected again for a  
5 subsequent broadcast until new client demand feedback data corresponding to that  
6 piece of content is received and the broadcast scheduling queue is updated  
7 continuously such that a new batch of content is broadcast during sequential  
8 broadcast schedule windows.

1 28. The apparatus of claim 27, wherein the individual sets of client  
2 demand feedback data are received from respective client systems on an  
3 asynchronous basis and the broadcast schedule queue is recalculated upon  
4 receiving each individual set of client demand feedback data.

1 29. The apparatus of claim 26, wherein the client demand feedback data  
2 comprises ratings data corresponding to respective pieces of content, and wherein  
3 the pieces of content in the broadcast schedule queue are ordered based on  
4 corresponding relative rating values derived from an aggregation of the ratings  
5 data.

1 30. The apparatus of claim 29, wherein, for at least a portion of the  
2 individual sets of client demand feedback data received from the client systems, a  
3 first portion of the ratings data comprises rating inputs provided by one or more  
4 users of the client system from which that individual set of client demand  
5 feedback data is received and a second portion of the ratings data are

6 automatically generated by that client system based on data stored on that client  
7 system that are indicative of content preferences of said one or more users of that  
8 client system.

1 31. The apparatus of claim 29, wherein the meta-data is broadcast as a  
2 continuous stream and includes a content descriptor for each piece of content  
3 comprising a set of attributes and attribute values that are used to describe that  
4 piece of content, and further wherein at least a portion of the client systems  
5 provide ratings data corresponding to an individual piece of content in response to  
6 receiving the content descriptor for that piece of content.

1 32. The apparatus of claim 26, wherein at least a portion of the individual  
2 sets of client demand feedback data comprise relative rankings data pertaining to  
3 relative levels of interest in at least two pieces of content, and wherein broadcast  
4 schedule queue is determined, at least in part, by aggregating the relative rankings  
5 data.

1 33. The apparatus of claim 32, wherein, for each individual set of client  
2 demand feedback data among at least a portion of the individual sets of client  
3 demand feedback data comprising relative rankings data, a first portion of the  
4 relative rankings data comprises relative ranking inputs provided by one or more  
5 users of the client system from which that individual set of client feedback is

6 received and a second portion of the relative rankings data are automatically  
7 generated by that client system based on data stored on that client system that are  
8 indicative of content preferences of said one or more users of that client system.

1 34. The apparatus of claim 32, wherein a current set of meta-data  
2 corresponding to a set of pieces of content considered for an upcoming broadcast  
3 is broadcast as a continuous stream that is repeated and includes a respective  
4 content descriptor for each piece of content included in the set of pieces of  
5 content, and wherein at least a portion of the individual sets of client demand  
6 feedback data includes a ranked list expressing a relative interest in all of the  
7 pieces of content in the set of pieces of content.

1 35. A machine-readable medium having a plurality of machine-executable  
2 instructions stored thereon, which when executed by a machine cause the machine  
3 to:

4 receive individual sets of client demand feedback data from a  
5 plurality of client systems, the individual sets of client demand feedback  
6 data generated in response to meta-data that is broadcast to the plurality of  
7 client systems, the meta-data including descriptions of a plurality of pieces  
8 of content that are in consideration for a upcoming broadcast, each  
9 individual set of client demand feedback data indicating a client interest  
10 level in at least a portion of the plurality of pieces of content;

11 maintain a broadcast schedule queue comprising an ordered list of  
12 pieces of content that indicates relative levels of client interest in each  
13 piece of content that are derived from an aggregation of the client demand  
14 feedback data; and

15 select a batch of content comprising one or more pieces of content  
16 from a top portion of the broadcast schedule queue to be broadcast during  
17 a next broadcast schedule window based on a size of said one or more  
18 pieces of content in combination with an available bandwidth for the next  
19 broadcast schedule window.

1 36. The machine-readable medium of claim 35, wherein execution of the  
2 plurality of machine instructions cause the machine to reset the client demand  
3 feedback data for each piece of content in the batch of content that is selected to  
4 be broadcast during a next broadcast schedule window in response to a broadcast  
5 of that batch of content such that the piece of content cannot be selected again for  
6 a subsequent broadcast until new client demand feedback data corresponding to  
7 that piece of content is received, and the broadcast scheduling queue is updated  
8 continuously such that a new batch of content is broadcast during sequential  
9 broadcast schedule windows.

1 37. The machine-readable media of claim 36, wherein the individual sets  
2 of client demand feedback data are received from respective client systems on an

3 asynchronous basis and the broadcast schedule queue is recalculated upon  
4 receiving each individual set of client demand feedback data.

1 38. The machine-readable media of claim 35, wherein the client demand  
2 feedback data comprises ratings data corresponding to respective pieces of  
3 content, and wherein the pieces of content in the broadcast schedule queue are  
4 ordered based on corresponding relative rating values derived from an aggregation  
5 of the ratings data.

1 39. The machine-readable media of claim 38, wherein, for at least a  
2 portion of the individual sets of client demand feedback data received from the  
3 client systems, a first portion of the ratings data comprises rating inputs provided  
4 by one or more users of the client system from which that individual set of client  
5 demand feedback data is received and a second portion of the ratings data are  
6 automatically generated by that client system based on data stored on that client  
7 system that are indicative of content preferences of said one or more users of that  
8 client system.

1 40. The machine-readable medium of claim 38, wherein the meta-data is  
2 broadcast as a continuous stream and includes a content descriptor for each piece  
3 of content comprising a set of attributes and attribute values that are used to  
4 describe that piece of content, and further wherein at least a portion of the client

5 systems provide ratings data corresponding to an individual piece of content in  
6 response to receiving the content descriptor for that piece of content.

1 41. The machine-readable medium of claim 35, wherein at least a portion  
2 of the individual sets of client demand/feedback data comprise relative rankings  
3 data pertaining to relative levels of interest in at least two pieces of content, and  
4 wherein broadcast schedule queue is determined, at least in part, by aggregating  
5 the relative rankings data.

1 42. The machine-readable medium of claim 41, wherein, for each  
2 individual set of client demand feedback data among at least a portion of the  
3 individual sets of client demand feedback data comprising relative rankings data,  
4 a first portion of the relative rankings data comprises relative ranking inputs  
5 provided by one or more users of the client system from which that individual set  
6 of client feedback is received and a second portion of the relative rankings data  
7 are automatically generated by that client system based on data stored on that  
8 client system that are indicative of content preferences of said one or more users  
9 of that client system.

1 43. The machine-readable medium of 41, wherein a current set of meta-  
2 data corresponding to a set of pieces of content considered for an upcoming  
3 broadcast is broadcast as a continuous stream that is repeated and includes a

4    respective content descriptor for each piece of content included in the set of pieces  
5    of content, and wherein at least a portion of the individual sets of client demand  
6    feedback data includes a ranked list expressing a relative interest in all of the  
7    pieces of content in the set of pieces of content.

1        44. A system, comprising:

2        a broadcast server;

3        a database server, linked in communication with the broadcast server; and

4        a plurality of client systems linked in communication with the broadcast

5    server via a first communications link and linked in communication with the

6    database server via a second communication link;

7        wherein the broadcast server is programmed to broadcast meta-data to said

8    plurality of client systems via the first communications link, the meta-data

9    including descriptions of a plurality of pieces of content that are considered for an

10   upcoming broadcast;

11        wherein each of said plurality of client systems is programmed to generate

12   an individual set of client demand feedback data indicating a client interest level

13   in at least a portion of the plurality of pieces of content based, in part, on the

14   descriptions of such provided by the meta-data;

15        wherein at least a portion of the plurality of client systems send individual

16   sets of client demand feedback data to the database server via the second

17   communications link;

18 wherein the database server is programmed to maintain a broadcast  
19 schedule queue comprising an ordered list of pieces of content that indicates  
20 relative levels of client interest in each piece of content that are derived from an  
21 aggregation of the client demand feedback data; and  
22 wherein at least one of the broadcast server and database server is  
23 programmed to select a batch of content comprising one or more pieces of content  
24 from a top portion of the broadcast schedule queue to be broadcast during a next  
25 broadcast schedule window based on a size of said one or more pieces of content  
26 in combination with an available bandwidth for the next broadcast schedule  
27 window.

1 45. The system of claim 44, wherein the one of the database server is  
2 programmed to reset the client demand feedback data for each piece of content in  
3 the batch of content that is selected to be broadcast during a next broadcast  
4 schedule window in response to a broadcast of that batch of content such that the  
5 piece of content cannot be selected again for a subsequent broadcast until new  
6 client demand feedback data corresponding to that piece of content is received,  
7 and the broadcast scheduling queue is updated continuously such that a new batch  
8 of content is broadcast during sequential broadcast schedule windows.

1 46. The system of claim 45, wherein the individual sets of client demand  
2 feedback data are received from respective client systems on an asynchronous



3 basis and the broadcast schedule queue is recalculated by the database server upon  
4 receiving each individual set of client demand feedback data.

1 47. The system of claim 44, wherein the client demand feedback data  
2 comprises ratings data corresponding to respective pieces of content, and wherein  
3 the pieces of content in the broadcast schedule queue are ordered based on  
4 corresponding relative rating values derived from an aggregation of the ratings  
5 data.

1 48. The system of claim 47, wherein, for at least a portion of the  
2 individual sets of client demand feedback data received from the client systems, a  
3 first portion of the ratings data comprises rating inputs provided by one or more  
4 users of the client system from which that individual set of client demand  
5 feedback data is received and a second portion of the ratings data are  
6 automatically generated by that client system based on data stored on that client  
7 system that are indicative of content preferences of said one or more users of that  
8 client system.

1 49. The system of claim 47, wherein the meta-data is broadcast as a  
2 continuous stream and includes a content descriptor for each piece of content  
3 comprising a set of attributes and attribute values that are used to describe that  
4 piece of content, and further wherein at least a portion of the client systems

5 provide ratings data corresponding to an individual piece of content in response to  
6 receiving the content descriptor for that piece of content.

1 50. The system of claim 44, wherein at least a portion of the individual  
2 sets of client demand feedback data comprise relative rankings data pertaining to  
3 relative levels of interest in at least two pieces of content, and wherein broadcast  
4 schedule queue is determined, at least in part, by aggregating the relative rankings  
5 data.

1 51. The system of claim 50, wherein, for each individual set of client  
2 demand feedback data among at least a portion of the individual sets of client  
3 demand feedback data comprising relative rankings data, a first portion of the  
4 relative rankings data comprises relative ranking inputs provided by one or more  
5 users of the client system from which that individual set of client feedback is  
6 received and a second portion of the relative rankings data are automatically  
7 generated by that client system based on data stored on that client system that are  
8 indicative of content preferences of said one or more users of that client system.

1 52. The system of claim 50, wherein a current set of meta-data  
2 corresponding to a set of pieces of content considered for an upcoming broadcast  
3 is broadcast as a continuous stream that is repeated and includes a respective  
4 content descriptor for each piece of content included in the set of pieces of

5 content, and wherein at least a portion of the individual sets of client demand  
6 feedback data includes a ranked list expressing a relative interest in all of the  
7 pieces of content in the set of pieces of content.

1 53. The system of claim 44, wherein the first communication link  
2 comprises a satellite broadcast link and the second communication link comprises  
3 a telecommunications link.

1 54. The system of claim 44, wherein the first communication link and  
2 second communications link comprise a bi-directional cable system link.

1 55. The system of claim 44, wherein the first communication link  
2 comprises a satellite broadcast link and the second communication link comprises  
3 a computer network communications link

1 56. The system of claim 44, wherein the first communication link and the  
2 second communications link comprise computer network communications links.

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